1976

Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Maud Russell

MAUD RUSSELL

ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: 1893 in Hayward, California.

EARLY LIFE: early interest in China; accepts position with Chinese YWCA, 1917; relationship between American YWCA and Chinese YWCA.

CHINA EXPERIENCES: why women were freer to be revolutionaries than men; various social/political programs of the YWCA; the Chinese YWCA method of inviting furloughed American workers back to China; the Chinese emphasis on relationships; defying the Kuomintang and Madame Chiang Kai-shek; trip to and impressions of Yenan during Japanese war; general description of revolutionary atmosphere in Sian and Tai Yuan; examples of YWCA work; living and working in Changsha; old friends met during 1959 trip to People's Republic of China; students' response to working with country people; student activism during May 4th movement in Peking, 1919; things to be learned from China; response to missionaries and to the missionary movement; future Sino-American relations; publisher of Far East Reporter since 1952.

INTERVIEWER: Donald E. MacInnis

DATE: Fall, 1976

PLACE: St. Paul, Minnesota

NUMBER OF PAGES: 101

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Maud Russell, who served many years in China, and for many years in the United States, now has done a great deal of speaking and traveling and showing films to groups all across the country about China. She has visited China several times, and since 1952, has published Far East Reporter, which focuses on China.

What years were you in China first, and what years have you been back since?

RUSSELL: I went to China in 1917. Came home in 1943. Of course, there were furlough interludes, but those 26 years I count as working in China.

In 1959, I went back to see the new China. Had three months in China. And in 1972, I went back the second time to see the new China and had one month. In 1978, I made my third trip to the new China.

I: In addition to your speaking and traveling now, you also publish. Tell us something about that.

RUSSELL: I publish a little pamphlet called Far East Reporter. My idea is to bring facts about China to the American public. When I started publishing in 1952, there were so many untruths, so many myths, so many misinterpretations of China. My purpose is not to speak for China; it's

to bring the facts to the American people. China speaks for herself. I don't try to speak for China. I try to give facts to the American people on which they can make up their minds about China.

I: Basically, the content of the Far East Reporter is written by many different people, isn't that right?

RUSSELL: Yes; and a good number of them I do myself. Sometimes they are reprints of very significant articles that have come out. Sometimes people write articles especially for the Far East Reporter.

I: How have you promoted the circulation of the Far East Reporter?

RUSSELL: Mainly by traveling around the country and visiting my subscribers. I have been traveling since 1948--every year going across country. From '48 to '52 I was working with the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy. That was put out of existence during the McCarthy period. I waited a few months and then I started on my own. Previous to that, the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy published Far East Spotlight. That was quite an ambitious publication that had a very large circulation. Mine is a much less pretentious publication.

I: Even so, it is very significant and it gets a wide readership. I know it's read in China, too.

RUSSELL: Yes, that's right. It gets around. It goes to over 20 countries--Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia, New Zealand and Australia.

I: Now, why don't we go back to your early years. What was it that motivated you to go to China?

RUSSELL: I grew up in California. Of course, we had a great many Chinese in California. Even as a very young child, I was aware of the Chinese. My father was a civil engineer and his work crew were 40 Chinese. By the time I was aware of things, the Chinese were no longer working people. They became business people: laundry people, fruit and vegetable people, etc. Then my father's work crew were Portuguese. So we were familiar with Chinese and then we had Chinese villages. We had a Chinese village about five miles from where I lived, and another Chinese village about 20 miles away. We would get in the car at night and drive around. We never got into a village, but we saw the moat and willow trees and smelled the "national air" of China.

I: By "national air," you mean they fertilized with ....

RUSSELL: I mean "national air" you smell with your nose!

So we were quite aware of Chinese. I grew up with a respect for Chinese people. When I was seven years old, I went to the post office one day with my father. I lived in a little town of about 3000 people.

I: What town was that?

RUSSELL: Hayward, California, and I remember the post office. To this day I cannot understand how a seven-year-old child could remember this. This was 1900. The postmaster said to my father: "Mr. Russell, do you know, every month hundreds of dollars go out of this post office to Sun Yat-sen and the revolution in China?" How that could have caught and been kept in the mind of a youngster--"the revolution of China!" So from the time I was seven I had this idea in my head.

When China became a republic in 1911, I was so excited, I didn't really understand much about it, this China; "it was a republic." "They had a revolution." Sun Yat-sen was leading a revolution. I was very early conditioned to being interested in China, being excited about China.

In that period, I was very much in church work--Sunday school, Christian Endeavors, etc.

I: What church was that?

RUSSELL: Congregational. My chum and I, we both wanted to be missionaries. So every quarter we would go to the district meeting of the Congregational churches--the quarterly meeting of all the churches in the area. We would go to the missionary secretary and we would say, "We want to be missionaries." He would take out his little book and write it down. Three months later we would go again. "Hello there, Dr. So-and-so; we want to be missionaries." Again, he would take out his little book and write it down. He always forgot he had seen us before. Thank God he did, because I realize that I would have been an awful missionary. But anyhow, that was my idea at that time.

Then I was at the University of California. Of course, they had a great many people going through, going to the Orient--missionaries. I was in the YWCA in the University of California. Hearing these people talk made me interested in being a missionary--particularly China. Of course, we heard talks on other countries in Asia, too.

I: You don't know what it was that particularly attracted you to China, then?

RUSSELL: We had our mission study on China, you remember. Every three or four years the mission study would be on

China. In the Protestant churches you had these missionary studies: Africa, Asia and other countries. I think about every four years it was on China. So it kept the idea of China before one all the time.

After I graduated from college, I worked in a law office awhile and then worked for the National Office of the YWCA in San Francisco. I was just an office worker there. The general secretary of the YWCA in China came to the United States to get volunteers to go to work in China for the YWCA.

I: A Chinese?

RUSSELL: No, she was an American--Grace Coppock.

I: When did they first have a Chinese general secretary?

RUSSELL: In 1926. It was while I was in China.

I was helping the general secretary arrange her schedule for meeting with people for interviews. I said to the executive director: "How about me having an interview with her about going to China?" I did and we talked. She said, "Have you done your graduate work?" I said, "No, not yet." "I guess we don't have anything to say to each other," she said. I said, "Why don't you let me go out now and learn the language and then come home and do my graduate work?" So that's how I got to go.

There was a setting up conference before those chosen went to China. We had setting up conferences for people who were going out. There were about, I think, 12 or 15 of us chosen to go to China. So I didn't get to New York for this. Instead, we had a setting up conference on the West Coast and we were told very distinctly: "You are not going out to proselytize. You are going out as a Christian woman to work with Chinese women on the problems of women. When you get to China, you will be completely under the direction of the Chinese YWCA. They will decide where you work, what you do, when you come home, whether you go back or not. All of the decisions about you will be made by the Chinese National Board of the YWCA." (The YWCA in China got started about 1891.) "If you have any disagreement with the Chinese YWCA, you cannot appeal back to the American YWCA. You have to appeal to the World's YWCA in which they are equal." So, you see, I was on a right basis right from the beginning.

Another wholesome aspect was that all the projects that the YWCAs put on had to be supported by the Chinese themselves locally. The local YWCA had to raise its money. So if I had a brilliant idea (first I was in student work and then later I was in city work), I had to "sell" it to my student committee or my city committee. They had to "sell"

it to the board and the board had to raise the money. Very different from missionary work. The missionaries had money with which they could start projects, whether the Chinese liked them or not.

I: So you had no access to American money?

RUSSELL: Absolutely not a cent of American money for local work. Everything that we put on had to be raised locally. And the local YWCAs also had to help support the National YWCA. Of course, the YWCA of the United States did give to the National for starting things, such as the first physical work in China and funds to help train women for YWCA work.

Another wholesome aspect was that my status on the staff was no different from the youngest or newest Chinese member on the staff. We had absolutely equal status on that. It was a very wholesome relationship.

I: But a bit of contradiction. You still had an American general secretary.

RUSSELL: Of course. All her decisions were made by the National Board.

We had training conferences every year for all the new staff. All the new staff members--local and national--came down to Shanghai for a month's training. Training in what? 1)"What kind of society are we working in? It's a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society in a revolutionary period." 2) "What's our program in this land of society?"

And to understand this society, we had all kinds of speakers come in and talk about it. We had Chinese businessmen come in. Chinese bankers come in. All kinds of people presenting the kind of society that China was. One of the things that was so interesting--I remember a Chinese banker coming in one day. He said, "Of course, China (this was way back in the '30s) is going Communist, so we have to think in those terms."

Now this goes back to another fact. I arrived in China in September, 1917. China was already a revolutionary situation. In fact, when we got off the steamer in Shanghai and were going up to the headquarters of the YWCA in Shanghai, before we got there, a group of students stopped us. "Sign a petition to get the American gunboats off the Yangtze River." So right there, before we even got to the headquarters of the YWCA, we were made aware of this revolutionary situation.

Of course, that whole period from '17 on to 1949 was an intense revolutionary period. This was one of the main characteristics of that whole period in which I was in China--revolution. And the other was the struggle for women's liberation. And being in women's work in China, of course, I was aware of that. So these two tremendous movements in a sense coalesced--the revolutionary movement

and the emancipation of women from the old society. These were going on together. What a period to be in the heart of China! What a period!

I went to China as a pacifist. I went to China as a church member. China affected both of these positions. I stopped being a pacifist. And I stopped being a church member, coming to dislike "Christianity," but considering myself as a religious person--due both to my Christian heritage and to the new concepts China was giving me about human relationships. Also studying at Union Theological Seminary about the eleven living religions, I saw that the concern of religion is about relationships--and the Chinese above all people are deeply concerned about relationships. Search for right relationships in this universe, rather than theology or institutions, seemed to me to be the heart of man's religious concern. So this is one of the impacts of working in this period in China.

I: Let me ask a question, Maud, before we go on. What preparation did you receive before you went abroad by the YWCA, either professionally or for understanding this revolutionary ferment in China?

RUSSELL: I didn't get any of that before. I got that all when I went to China.

I: There was no briefing or special study program at all?

RUSSELL: No, in fact, I doubt that the National YWCA here was very much aware of the revolutionary ferment in China. For instance, when I got to China, I began sending back to the YWCA in New York, translations of leaflets--revolutionary leaflets and letters describing what I was learning. At that time they were very appreciative of this material that was going into their files about what was happening in China. These were all kinds of analyses about what was happening in a political and revolutionary sense. We had one or two other staff people in China who were also interested in what was happening in the revolutionary struggle in China.

I: How about professional training for Y work?

NELSON: No, I didn't have that. China taught me. What I learned, I learned in China. When I came home in '43, I wanted to come home. So I had to go to the National Board and ask to come home. I talked with the national chairman of the China YWCA and she said, "Why do you want to go home?" I said, "First, I'm getting too old for China." It was a <u>young</u> women's Christian association. For instance, people got to be executives by the time they were 28 or 30. In this country, you had to be 40 or 50 before you got to be an executive.

Second, I felt, though there was no evidence from my colleagues, I was a little bit of a burden to them because I was going with them to all these big revolutionary movements, parades, rallies, demonstrations and meetings. I used to think, my, it must be awful hard for them to have this big-nose woman with them. I kind of felt that maybe I was a burden to them. I never had any expression from them about that, but I kind of felt that.

Third, to the chairman, I said, "I want to get home and work. It's too easy in China. I don't have any real responsibility. I want to go home and be a responsible citizen." The head of the YWCA (she was also the president of one of the big colleges in China) said, "Miss Russell, you are a very wise woman. We have so many missionaries who think they are indispensable. They should have gone home a long time ago." And another thing: not one single Chinese said to me, "Oh, Miss Russell, you must stay. We cannot let you go." Nobody said that, and it was so honest. I was so pleased with that. So I got their permission to come home.

One of the things, they had a party for two of us Americans who were coming home together at that time. It was a farewell party with talks and presents. We had to get up and say something. So I got up and I said,

"I know some of you think I'm pretty left, but whatever I am today (this was talking to the National Board of the YWCA, these Chinese women) is the result of the work you gave me to do, the places you sent me. This is what made me what I am today. It's your fault! Whatever I am, it is your fault!"

I: Now you give me the impression, by describing some of the speakers that you had, etc., over there that the YW was not a conservative, upper-class organization.

RUSSELL: No, there even was a period in China when people said that next to the Communist party, the YWCA was the most radical movement in China! The National Board and staff invited even Communists to speak and to tell us about situations in various parts of China.

I: Is that right?

RUSSELL: The YWCA was in a very flexible position because of the general attitude toward women. We could get away with things that the YMCA couldn't get away with.

I: Such as?

RUSSELL: For instance, I remember in Changsha, we got concerned about the salaries we were paying our workers. So we got the board women to make a survey of the city.

"What is being paid in other organizations?" "What is the price of eggs?" "What is the price of rice?" And the YMCA was furious with us. They said, "You're going Communist--you're going Communist, making a study like this."

The women could get away with it, but the men couldn't. Now, if a man did this, he would be criticized and checked and maybe fired. But a woman--and most of our staff were single women--if they lost their jobs, they could go another place and get a job. It didn't follow them--a reputation of being a radical or something. I mean the women were in a very favorable position to take stands and do things that a man with a family and children in school, and that kind of thing, couldn't do. And, of course, women in China had not yet acquired the ramifications of community relationships that men had. They were less pubicly known, therefore, less noticed. And if they were forced to move, they were not burdened with family and property restraints.

I: Now you say that the YW was deeply involved in the women's movement, the movement for women's liberation.

RUSSELL: It was one of the women's movements of China.

I: Did that also give the women a particular entree to this kind of radical thinking?

RUSSELL: We had student work and there were student movements--revolutionary student movements. We had rural work and, of course, there was rural development going on--revolutionary. Most importantly, we had industrial work with women in industrial groups, clubs. We had clubs all over Tientsin and Shanghai, particularly, that I knew about. These girls would work in factories 12 to 15 hours a day, and then come to the YWCA for discussion groups and for classes and things like that. And in these they discussed what was happening.

Now, one of the proofs of what these clubs were doing was when I went up to Yenan in 1939. I met girls from our industrial clubs in Shanghai and they said, "Oh, yes, Miss Russell, you came and spoke to our club one night."

When I went to the Soviet Union in 1933, for four months, I worked in the Soviet Union as a worker and got a worker's card. When we went back to China, I went around to these industrial clubs in Shanghai, telling what I had seen in the Soviet Union. In 1959, when I went to China, I was standing looking in a window. A Chinese woman came up to me and she said in Chinese, "Are you a Russian?" I said no. "Are you an American?" I said yes. Then, using my Chinese name, she said, "Are you Miss Russell?" Who was she? She said, "When you came back from the Soviet Union

in 1933 (this was 1959 and she was talking to me), I was working in a factory across the river in terrible conditions, absolutely terrible conditions. And you came and talked about the Soviet Union." She said, "That was the first time in my life that I knew life could be different from the kind of life I had. That was the first time I ever had that idea." She was then on her way to set up a complete textile mill in, I forget whether it was Burma or Nepal or someplace in Asia. She was the assistant to the man who was in charge of all the textile factories in Shanghai.

I: She had been just a simple worker?

RUSSELL: She had been an oppressed worker in a factory in Putong across the river. And this talking about the Soviet Union had influenced her.

And then when I went up to Yenan, I met girls who had heard me talk in Shanghai--way up in Yenan. They had made that whole trip up to Yenan either walking or in the Chinese army. So this showed you something of the kinds of things that the YWCA was doing in these industrial clubs. These girls were getting ideas. They were learning how to function together. They were learning to read and write. And all this was part of the revolutionary process in which the YWCA participated.

I: Has that been written up well?

RUSSELL: I don't think so.

I: It certainly should be. Let's go back chronologically now to your first term. Say something about how you were trained in the language and other things. What was the work you did and where were you?

RUSSELL: When I first got to Shanghai, that was in September 1917, I stayed in Shanghai and worked in the National office and did office work, helped there. Then in '19, they sent me up to Nanking to the University of Nanking for a language. I was there for, I think, about a year and a half studying language at the University of Nanking.

I: Was that a school for foreign people?

RUSSELL: It was a department of the University of Nanking, a department for training missionaries and foreigners. They had about, I think, 100 students there studying language. They had regular classes studying language.

Then, some people of the Peking YWCA got sick, so they sent me up to Peking to work. I worked in the Peking YWCA for awhile. Then they sent me to the interior, to Changsha, to work in the YWCA there. First, I did student work, working among students, and then I went into city work. City work was pretty much the work of working with committees, organizing and training committees.

(Oh, I came home for a few months in 1919. My father died and I came home and then went back.) Then I came home again in 1923 for a furlough.

One of the things in China was when you came home on furlough, after three months the Chinese YWCA sent word whether you were to come back or not. They evaluated your work. Now sometimes you might have been in a place where you were doing a very good job. Sometimes you might be in a place where (I never had this experience) a very difficult situation developed and a lot of personal friction and that kind of thing. So the China National YWCA would take those months to examine the work of the ones on furlough and then decide and see what had been our function or whether they wanted us back or not. We didn't know until about three months after we had been home whether the Chinese were going to invite us back. It wasn't a decision by New York if we were to go back; it was a decision by the Chinese.

We had to submit to the Chinese board before we came home what we were going to do when we came home. I think we were home 18 months, maybe less, but three months of it was complete vacation, and the other part of it we had to work in YWCAs in this country and we had to study. Do some studying in a university and do local work in YWCAs and some speaking. This was the process when we came home.

I: So what did you do when you came home? Did you study?

RUSSELL: I studied. I went to New York and studied

I: What did you study?

RUSSELL: I took some courses at Columbia, and then the National YWCA had a training school in New York and I took classes there. I lived at the National YWCA and took classes there. One furlough I came home and took courses at Columbia in education. I had enough credits in Chinese language. When we studied at the University of Nanking, that was under the Board of Regents of the State of New York. It was a missionary college, so any credits I got for studying Chinese there I could apply for a degree in this country. I had enough to get an MA in Chinese, but I didn't use that. I took classes in education and got my MA in education.

I: So during the first term, then, you were moved around quite a bit. What were the major influences on your thinking during that period? What experiences?

RUSSELL: The fact that you are in a revolutionary China was the overwhelming education that influenced you. Getting rid of pacifist ideas was certainly another thing that was happening.

In 1922, when I went home, I went by way of India. We had a day or so where Tagore was. So we visited classes and then had an interview with Tagore. He said to three of us, two other American YWCA people and myself, as we sat and talked with him, "I have been invited to China." So he put his hand in his pocket and drew out a letter. "Now I have a question I want to ask you on going to China. What kind of underwear should I take?" The questions of the great! "What kind of underwear should I take?" So he went to China.

When I got back to China in '24, I found that the Chinese were very suspicious of him. They thought he was a British agent. He was talking peace and they thought he was coming to China to make China not prepare for defense. So the reaction to him was one of negative reaction. They thought he was trying to keep them weak by pacifism.

I: So getting back to these influences in the first term there, the revolutionary ferment ....

RUSSELL: That was one thing. Then another thing is that I tried to translate what had been meaningful to me in the Christian religion, but it didn't work in Chinese at all. A good deal of our Christian emotion is in uttering phrases. There are certain phrases that people use: "The blood of the Lamb," "My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." A lot of those,

when you translate them into Chinese, are absolutely empty. Then I began to see the Chinese really were religious. They really were religious. I began to see that the Chinese, though not Christian, were religious--they were what we Christians thought of as religious: good in relations. And I heard missionaries saying, when confronted by a good Chinese, "You know, he really is a Christian!"--as if only Christians could be good! And I saw how this infuriated Chinese, and disgusted me.

I: Did you feel this created some internal tension within yourself to be working for a Christian organization?

RUSSELL: Not a bit, not a bit. I had grown up in a very progressive Congregational church, where experience and learning precluded any conflict between theology and facts. You see, over half of our Chinese members were non-Christian.

I: Chinese members?

RUSSELL: We were working on the problems of women in China. And, fitting in with my Congregational experiences, the Chinese Christians were not theological. If you got a group of foreigners and began talking religion, you would have a fight before you were finished, but you couldn't get the Chinese excited about theological things.

Now, for instance, we had the World's president of the YWCA come to China, Miss Van Asch van Wijck. She visited all around in Chinese YWCAs and came to Shanghai and met with the National Board and staff. It's a day I'll never forget.

I: When was that?

RUSSELL: This was in the '30s. So Miss Van Asch van Wijck, meeting with our National staff and board, began to criticize the YWCA of China. She said, "You're not theological enough. You're not dogmatic enough. You don't have enough statements of faith. You don't have enough prayer meetings; you don't have enough Bible readings; you don't have enough worship services; you're too much like the American YWCA." She went on and on like this--just laying down the law to the National YWCA of China.

We had on our board some very spicy women who might have taken her on, but the person who did take her on was the most mild person. She was the dean of women in one of the big colleges in Shanghai. A very gentle person. She wouldn't hurt anybody's feelings. She was just the epitome of gentleness. So she gets up and she looks down and says, "Miss Van Asch van Wijck, you have come out here to ram religion down our throats--and we are ready to

vomit. Let me tell you what we consider religion. Out in the industrial section of Shanghai, the YWCA has centers for industrial women, and American secretaries live with the Chinese in those centers. That is what we call religion."

Well, Miss Van Asch van Wijck had a nervous breakdown and went to the hospital. They just told her off good and fair. The Chinese consider what you do, not what your theological ideas are.

Now, I think the Chinese are very religious people. I took a course in religion at Union Theological with Dr. Hume on the eleven living religions which made me realize how deeply, truly religious are the Chinese people. He would come with this pile of books every time and we would have to read the scriptures of the eleven living religions. What's the content of these scriptures? Man's concern with relationships. What is his relationship to the unknown? Some people call it fate, some people call it God. What is his relationship to the past? What is his relationship to the future? What is his relationship to people? What is his relationship to the things that happen to him? To the happy things, the forlorn things? This--right relations--is the concern of religion. And you're never going to do away with that. Man is always going to be concerned about relationships. And there are no people

in the world that have more stress on right relationships than the Chinese--whether it's their relationship to nature or whether it's their relationship to other people. So in that sense, I consider the people very religious--not institutionally religious. As Bishop Ting says, "You're seeing the withering away of institutional religion."

In my dealings with Chinese people, I saw their efforts to maintain right relationships. A person would tell a lie in order not to violate a relationship. Now, we would think it was terrible to tell a lie. But the Chinese put primary the maintaining of relationships.

I've lived in Changsha and we had a great deal of fighting. The opposing force would get on the mountain across the river and shell the city. But they never really took the city. They could have taken it. So I said to a Chinese general one day, "Why don't they settle this thing?" "Oh," he said, "those people we're fighting, someday we're going to be with them. We'll use silver dollars; we'll get them. We can't defeat them completely. Someday we will have to work with those people." Now, this was a rather crude illustration, but still this sense of relationship. Keep the door open for right relations. You got that so strong in China: That right relationships is the main thing, and that's the concern of religion.

I: This was not a problem, then, for you to be working for the YWCA?

RUSSELL: Oh, not a bit of a problem.

I: The YWCA was a capital C. How about your American colleagues?

RUSSELL: We all saw the YWCA as one of the women's movements of China. We were concerned about people because we were basically Christians. That was our basic, first qualification, you might say.

I: How did the YWCA work with other women's movements?

RUSSELL: There never was any conflict, except with Madame Chiang when she tried to make all women's movements come under her banner during the war with Japan. She ordered all the women's movements in China to come under her organization. So two of us went and called her.

I: What did she call that? Do you remember?

RUSSELL: It was the New Life Movement.

I: I wonder if it was the Women's Anti-Aggression League because they still have that in Taiwan.

RUSSELL: Anyhow, in Chungking we went and called on her. We said, "Madame Chiang, we cannot, the YWCA cannot, come under your organization and we will not. In occupied areas, where the Japanese are, we have YWCAs. If they have come

under your organization, they'll all probably disappear. They maintain relationships with the rest of China." These YWCAs are very important centers in the occupied areas. (They carried on all kinds of political work. For instance, they would have graduation of the primary classes. Then there would be a political meeting, you see, under the banner of being the graduation of the primary.) "If you make them come under your banner, all YWCAs in the occupied areas will disappear or be unable to carry on that patriotic function." The YWCA just stayed out of Madame Chiang's organization. We defied her.

I: Did you personally participate in that interview? Who was with you?

RUSSELL: Yes. It was Lily Haas

I: An American?

RUSSELL: Yes. A Chinese secretary would have been vulnerable to attack by Madame Chiang. Another thing--for instance, Chiang Kai-shek, during the war years, promulgated a new constitution, but people were forbidden to study it. They couldn't study it. We called a meeting of our members to study it. So we prepared all these true/false, multiple choice sheets. People came to the meeting and we had all these. We were just beginning when Kuomintang soldiers marched in and said, "You can't have this meeting," and they gathered up all the sheets and left.

So we waited three weeks and called the meeting again. We put the questions on the blackboard. People answered them, and then we erased them so there was nothing anybody could take home. We had the meeting and carried on. We found ways to get around this Kuomintang business. It was a very exciting period in China.

I: Again, we were talking about influences on your own career and your own attitudes. Were there certain individuals or incidents in your first term or second term that were particularly influential? Or work that you personally did?

RUSSELL: When I was in student work, we had discussion groups. I went around to the different schools and had discussion groups and participated in local, regional and national student conferences. Later, I was in city work and most of my work in city work was with the organization and function of committees, carrying out committee work. And, of course, we put on all kinds of activities. But the Chinese staff did most of the activities, like the mothers' clubs, cooking classes, discussion groups. We had public meetings--getting women involved in understanding the society in which they were working.

Of course, our hostels were a very important part of our work because they were mainly for young women who wanted to get more modern. They would come to the YWCA and have

classes in the YWCA. Some of the girls came in with their intended husbands who would bring them and say, "I'm engaged to this girl. She's old-fashioned. I want her to become modern. Can she live at the YWCA and take classes?" That kind of thing. It was a process of helping these young women gear into a new kind of society.

I: They were educated young women?

RUSSELL: No, not all. They had not had classes. Hadn't been in school.

I: What types of classes were offered?

RUSSELL: We had classes in Chinese. We had classes in English. We had classes in arithmetic. There were Chinese teachers, of course.

I: Home economics and that sort of thing?

RUSSELL: In the board we did that. In the mothers' clubs. We had simple home economics. For a while we had Chinese typewriters. Taught classes in Chinese typewriters. They were just coming on the market.

I: Did you have athletic programs?

RUSSELL: We did some, but not a big program in athletics.

I: How about arts and culture? Music, drama, literature, poetry?

RUSSELL: YWCA members put on some plays. I was thinking in terms of Changsha.

I: You mentioned working with the women workers in the factories. Was that an important element in the YWCA work?

RUSSELL: I wasn't in industrial work. I was city and student. I was not in the industrial department. But when I came home from the Soviet Union, I went around and spoke in some of these clubs, so I had contact with them.

I: You had industrial work and you had city and student. What other departments were there?

RUSSELL: There were girls' work, rural work, city, student and industrial.

I: Did you have any contact with the rural work?

RUSSELL: No, not a bit. I don't think I ever visited a rural Y.

I: Do you know if that was a very important part of the YW work? Or was it not?

RUSSELL: We had a very active staff in that--a very aggressive staff in that.

I: Now you worked in the city and student work. How much were you aware of the Communist work among the labor class, the urban proletariat?

RUSSELL: I knew some Chinese progressives---probably some of them were Communists. We had a very close friend who was very active in political things. He was one of our close friends and we were with him quite a bit. He was telling us what was happening. And, of course, Rewi Alley was very active in the industrial field and knew what was happening. So we went around with him a great deal, learning about conditions in the factory situation in Shanghai.

There were labor demonstrations and constant arrests of people. For instance, in the YWCA, our industrial secretaries would have to hide night after night and sleep in different places. We had a very fine lawyer who became the Minister of Justice in the new China. He defended our YWCA staff who got involved with the authorities. It was a very precarious life that the industrial secretaries, the people who were doing industrial work, lived. Of course, the girls in industrial were getting arrested all the time and we had to help them get out of the clutches of the law.

I: Were they arrested on suspicion of being leftists?

RUSSELL: Left, Communist, and that sort of thing. They may not have been Communists, but . . . so the YWCA was very active in defending these people.

I: Were you, yourself, aware of the growing Communist influence in the working class or were you just generally aware there was a ferment?

RUSSELL: I wasn't "generally aware."

I: You were in city and student work. Could you describe some of the actual programming that you and others did in the Chinese YWCA work in the city and student work? Was student work divided in different age levels?

RUSSELL: We had girls' work and that took the young adolescents up to, I think, about 12 or 13. So I didn't have anything to do with that. There was a separate division in that.

I: Those girls could have been working girls and they could have been students, both?

RUSSELL: I think for the most part they were students. I don't think the girls' department worked with young girls in industry.

I: So what other student levels did you work with?

RUSSELL: We had the high schools and the colleges.

I: On the campuses or off the campuses?

RUSSELL: Both. For instance, we would sometimes take classes in the high schools. Sometimes we had discussion groups there.

I: In the public high schools?

RUSSELL: Yes, in the government high schools.

I: There was no problem there?

RUSSELL: No, it depends, of course, on the heads--the principals of the school. With some I had very close relations and could meet freely with student groups. In Changsha it was mostly with industrial schools. We had a great many industrial middle schools in China, in Changsha. When the Communists took the city, Changsha, in 1927, board members of the YWCA came to me and said, "Please leave." These were my true Chinese friends. So I very reluctantly left. They said, "We don't want a dead foreigner on our hands." They were very blunt about it. So I left. That was in 1927.

I: Where did you go?

RUSSELL: I went to Shanghai and then I went to the Philippines for the summer.

TAPE ONE-SIDE TWO

After Changsha I also went to Wuchang. During the Northern Expedition I was in Wuchang. I arrived in Wuchang just before they closed the city gates. We could get out if we wanted to, but I decided to stay. We were beseiged for 42 days. This was in 1927. I gathered up all kinds of handbills and translated them. Very exciting period it was in that period. And then the new government was set up in Hankow in 1928.

I: I wonder if we could reconstruct your 26 years in China, sort of the highlights of where you were. We may not get the exact years, but at least approximately.

RUSSELL: I came home in '23 via India. Came back in 1925. Had another furlough in 1933. I worked in YWCAs in Hong Kong, Tsinan, Chefoo, Tientsin, Taiyuan, Kweiyang, Sian, Chengtu and Wuchang. While in Sian, I visited Yenan, a visit made possible by an introduction from Teng Ying-chow (Madame Chou En-lai).

I: That must have made quite an impact on you.

RUSSELL: Oh, sure. I went in on a truck, laden with ammunition--just piled high with ammunition. On the top of that were 26 soldiers. Then in the cab was a little Chinese woman nurse and the driver and a political commissar. Going in, as we left from Sian, we got stopped every now and then by the Kuomintang soldiers. All along the way were students making their trek to Yenan. They wanted to get on that truck. But the rule was they had to walk the whole way. Of course, there wasn't any room for them on the truck anyhow. We had on board this political commissar and he was wonderful. He would get off and deal with these Kuomintang solders and he got us through every time.

Finally, we came to a river--pouring rain--so we went underneath the truck to get out of the rain. We got into

a cave for part of the night. Then the next morning we got across the river. They carried us piggy-back out in the water and on to the boats. Then the truck followed and fell into the river. It was some trip!

We got on the other side of the river and drove on. Then, we got into a great big mud puddle and couldn't get out. So we spent a couple of nights with the peasants. I slept in a little tiny room on the top of a saw horse, like an ironing board, with a whole bunch of soldiers in the room. We went out in the fields and ate the fruit in the fields--delicious melons.

As we went on and stopped, people would say, "What nationality?" and I would say, "American." Then, "Do you know Evans Fordyce Carlson?" Peasants way up there talking about Carlson! "What an American! What an American!" And then they would tell you about him: how he traveled not on a horse, not with a servant, stuffing his belongings in his great overcoat.

Then I got up to Yenan. I lived in a cave and visited classes at the revolutionary university there. Talked to Japanese prisoners-of-war and went off to see Ting Ling who was working in the fields, miles and miles away. I sat on the ground with Mao Tse-tung at an immense mass meeting protesting Chiang Kai-shek's burying the people alive.

I: You were there one week?

RUSSELL: I was there a week. It was an intensive week.

I: You were the only foreigner on that trip?

RUSSELL: Yes, the only foreigner in Yenan at the time. I didn't see any others, except Ma Hai-teh (George Hatem).

I: What impressed you about that most?

RUSSELL: The organization of the place. You lived in caves. The people that sold stuff had their things on tables outside the caves. There would be an alarm and they could take everything inside in no time. Some caves had an entrance on one side, and then on the other side of the hill was an entrance so if they got bombed they weren't closed in. That kind of organization.

Then they had briefings. The students came to class with all their things packed and could immediately disappear if there was an alarm. They met in classes outside the caves on a smooth place. The city inside the walls of Yenan was completely bombed. Oh yes, there was one foreigner there in the city who had a clinic, midst the ruins. That was George Hatem. As far as I remember, that was the first time I met him, but he said he and I were in a discussion group in Shanghai. I don't remember that. So that was a very interesting period.

The day I wanted to go see Ting Ling she was miles and miles away. I had to follow the river, go along the river

bank. We came to a place where there was a great big rock and we had to crawl across this rock. When we got there, there was a group of Chinese young men coming this way so we had to wait until the Chinese had crawled across the rock. As they went on, I looked and there was this one lad; oh, he was beautiful. His whole carriage was beautiful! Suddenly, as I watched, he turned around and said, "Are you Maud Russell?" He was Rewi Alley's son, whom I had met because I used to be in his home in Shanghai.

So I went on and got up to this place where Ting Ling was. She was off in the fields working and we had to find her to talk to her.

So it was quite a period. And then there was a great big mass meeting protesting Chiang Kai-shek's burying people alive. Oh, a tremendous mass meeting, and that is where I sat on the ground with Mao Tse-tung.

I: Now, you say it was Mrs. Chou En-lai who arranged that. How did that come about?

RUSSELL: I don't know who got that for me. I just don't know. She sent me a note which I delivered to the Communist headquarters in Sian. I said I wanted to go to Yenan, so she arranged it. The people at the headquarters in Yenan then sent word to me. They said, "We will send you word. Be ready to go at any time." I was living with a British missionary in Sian. One day I came in and there

was this note: "Be at the headquarters tomorrow morning at 6:00." So I was there, got on this truck and off we went.

I: After that was it possible, then, for you to have good relations in your work with people who were linked with Yenan?

RUSSELL: I was not aware of it, but surely it didn't hurt!

I: You were still in Kuomintang country, Sian or wherever, which means that it was very dangerous for any Chinese to be allied with the Communists. They had to be completely underground, I suppose?

RUSSELL: Even in Kuomintang China there was revolutionary work going on all the time. For instance, I was in Taiyuan, and that was run by Yen Hsi-shan. Now what they had there was a library with all the Marxist works in it and discussion groups. The Communists there got Yen Hsi-shan to issue a pamphlet about study. All the factory workers had to study this pamphlet. It was purely Communist study, but Yen didn't know that. They did it in such a way that it had some pages with Yen's ideas; other pages with Communist ideas. Since Yen ordered all factory workers to study it, it provided the Communists with an excellent opportunity to really educate the workers.

And they were using all these Marxist books in a Yen-sponsored institute preparing students to go abroad. That was a formal organization in which these students were studying and reading Marx! So that was going on in these groups. Yen Hsi-shan forced the workers to be in study groups. While it started in with the kinds of things Yen wanted, inside it was all this other stuff. So it really was a revolutionary study period. Now this was happening right under the eyes of the Kuomintang.

I: Did the YW have anything to do with those study groups?

RUSSELL: One day my Chinese colleague showed me an invitation to a banquet Governor Yen was giving for a visiting foreigner. I recognized the Chinese name of Agnes Smedley, but did not let on that I knew her. The next morning, after the banquet my colleague told me, "The guest at the banquet says she knows you." I said, "What was her name? Oh, yes, I did meet her once, I think, on the street in Shanghai," (although Agnes and I were good friends.) "She is coming for you tomorrow to go visiting Yen's modern factories." She arrived with the governor's wife. All day we drove around, visiting factories, with Agnes and me in the back seat and the governor's wife in the front seat. Agnes and I very carefully said, "Miss Smedley; Miss Russell," and kicked each other under the car's robe! Agnes had been invited by the governor on recommendation of the Communist students.

We spent a second day driving around, this time with a progressive Chinese who had been Edgar Snow's companion, so we were more relaxed! Then some Shanghai foreigners turned up at the hotel where Agnes was staying. They knew her, she felt, and would make trouble. So she slipped out in the night and got on a third-class train (though she had first-class tickets for her return to Shanghai) and got out as fast as possible!!

One of the factories we visited was a woolen factory. A few days later my Chinese colleague and I went to the factory. I wanted to buy some goods for a suit. I found a beautiful piece of wool, but they refused to sell. "What?" said my colleague to them. "You refuse to sell to a foreign guest?" She shamed them into selling me the cloth. She so liked the goods that the next day we went back to the factory to buy some woolen goods for her. They again refused. "What?" she said, "you will sell to a foreigner, but not to a Chinese?" She got her wool!! Life had its intriguing moments in a feudal city going modern and Communist!

I: What about Sian, do you remember any work there?

RUSSELL: In Sian, we had an international YWCA. I stayed with these British missionaries and we had women's clubs, discussion groups and mothers' clubs and cooking classes and things like that.

I: Did you ever participate in opening up new work?

RUSSELL: No, I didn't. I think I worked mostly with how you carried on committee work. How you got people to participate. How you had people taking responsibility on various committees. How you had evaluation of the work you did. We did a great deal of evaluation of the work we did.

For instance, we would put on a big event. Then we would sit down and evaluate it. "What did we do that was good? What did we do that was bad? What changes should be made next time?"

As an example: In one city the YWCA had a bazaar. Mrs. Lee was responsible for handling the cash intake, but she was so social with everybody who came in that the finances got all mixed up. When we had the evaluation, we praised her social activity and suggested that next time someone else handle the finances but she be the social secretary.

Another example: In another city we made a survey of our membership. The membership secretary got very discouraged; only one in about a dozen homes where she tried a call could she find the women. She wanted to quit--as a failure. We pointed out that she had made a real contribution to our work: she had--her statistics had--discovered that families were moving away from that city due to the uncertain military situation. That meant we had to

plan our work, not in terms of a season, but each activity in terms of a few short weeks. In another city the hostel secretary was excellent in finances but very poor in relations with the hostel guests. There was a discussion of this: she should get more training in business. The YWCA helped her find a school for such training. She left the YWCA with no hard feelings, with a sense of worth--and finally, during her study, found a husband!

We did a lot of evaluation: "Who was good at this and who was bad at that." This idea of criticism and self-criticism, the YWCA practiced it long before the whole of China was talking about criticism and self-criticism. So my work was pretty much the sole function of how committees were built and functioned. Who sits next to whom. If there was a woman who, at meetings, interferred all the time, we would sit her in a place where somebody could control her and see that she wouldn't get away with talking too long. There was a very good book on this question of how groups function. I translated parts of that and used that for our committee work. New Republic, I think it was called. I think it was that. It was a book about how you function, how a committee functions, how a group functions.

I: How about your relations with Chinese colleagues? Can you explain or describe some of the ways in which you worked together?

RUSSELL: I was just a member. I had no more prestige than the newest recruit on the staff. I was just a member of the staff, often working under a young Chinese colleague.

I: How were the Chinese colleagues recruited and trained?

RUSSELL: One of the things was that the national recruiting secretary spent a great deal of time going around to the universities presenting the YWCA as a profession. The National Board of China criticized her because she was including Communists among her recruits. And she said, "Look, these are the people of the future. If you pick just ordinary people, you're going to go backward. If you pick these people, you're at least going to go forward somewhat." She got away with it, too. Of course, some of her recruits are now in the government.

I: She was Chinese, of course.

RUSSELL: No, she was American. A very wise person--Lily Haas.

I: You say in one place, I believe in Taiyuan, you lived with some missionaries?

RUSSELL: I was on a missionary compound. I didn't live with the missionaries. In Sian I lived with British missionaries. In Tsinan I lived by myself at the YWCA. In Chengtu I lived on the campus with missionaries. In Kweiyang I lived at the YWCA. Peking, of course, we had our YWCA headquarters and I lived there.

I: How about Shanghai?

RUSSELL: In Shanghai I lived with YWCA people in apartment houses in various parts of the city.

I: Wuchang?

RUSSELL: In Wuchang I lived on a missionary compound, but not with missionaries.

I: Changsha?

RUSSELL: In Changsha I first lived on the Tso family compound and later at the YWCA. The YWCA in Changsha was in an old temple compound erected for a very famous Chinese duke, Tso Tsung-t'ang. I lived with this Tso family of 400 people on on a very large compound. Three or four generations of Tso. In another part of the city they had this temple to the famous Duke Tso and they turned it over to the YWCA. It had temple grounds, auxiliary buildings, and then the big temple. It had a garden with a stream, and a wooden copy of the marble boat in Peking and a little house tower from which you could look out over the river. The temple gardens had a winding stream with lovely walks. Then it had a great big pool, almost the size of a city block. They turned this temple ground over to the YWCA. It was out of repair.

Just about that time, the mayor of the city decided to take all the beggars off the streets of Changsha. So he took all the beggars off and put the men all in one place and the women in another place--great big places.

So the YWCA said, "Let's do something about this." Our very fine Swedish secretary, Ingeborg Wikander, went to the mayor and said, "Now look, you've taken these people. What are you going to do with them?" He said he didn't have any plans. She said, "These are people who have skills. They happen to be beggars. Why did they become beggars?" She worked out a plan with the mayor so that men and women could get back into productive work. She went among the men and picked out the masons, carpenters, and painters. They all came to the YWCA, to this temple, and renovated it. Did all the stone work and the painting work and all that.

I: They were paid?

RUSSELL: They were paid, yes.

I: By whom?

RUSSELL: The YWCA. Then they got back into the unions. They didn't call them unions--guilds. I remember one day, a group of the city fathers came to see what the beggars were doing at the temple. And I walked out with them. They kept saying, "Unbelievable!" To see these beggars working, they just couldn't believe it. So these workers renovated the temple and its grounds.

She went among the women beggars and found those who had cross-stitch skills. We started cross-stitch factories all over the city. These women did cross-stitch and the YWCA sold it all over the world. And these women got back in their families. They got back and became productive people making cross-stitch on their own. So this was one of the things the YWCA did in Changsha.

In this temple, we had classes and we had a hostel there. We had all kinds of meetings.

When I went back to China in 1959, I went back to visit Changsha. There was one woman from the family living there where 400 used to live. I visited members of this family all around China in different places. The temple had been torn down and in its place a beautiful workers' club had been built. They still had this lovely garden with the boat and the little stream--beautiful place.

When I went to Shanghai, I saw my friend, Madame Tso and I said, "Madame Tso the Fifth."

I: When was that?

RUSSELL: In 1959. So I went to see her. Eighty years old. "Oh, Madame Tso," (she's one of my very close friends). She said, "Don't you call me Madame Tso." Tso Tsung-t'ang had 12 grandsons and she was the widow of one of the 12 grandsons. And she was the fifth. Madame Tso the Fifth.

She said, "Don't you call me Madame Tso." Using her maiden name, she said, "I am now Comrade Chiang." Very active in her community work.

I: Eighty years old!

RUSSELL: She said, "Isn't it wonderful what had happened to that Tso temple? It isn't just the Tso family temple. It belongs to the people. It's a workers' place now." Absolutely approving of it 100 percent.

I: How is it used now?

RUSSELL: It's a workers' club now. A beautiful workers' club. The whole thing. They have torn down the temple part and put up buildings, but all the premise is a beautiful workers' club. That was in '59, within less than 10 years.

I: You say that the residence where 400 members of the family lived together, only one member of the family was there in '59. Who else lived there then? Was it filled with people living?

RUSSELL: That I don't know. I also visited a couple of schools I had known. One was I Fang--a private girls' middle school run by Tseng Pao Sun, granddaughter of a famous Chinese hero, the imperial general, Tseng Kuo-fan.

Originally, it had about 70 students. I said I wanted to see it, so that was arranged. When I got to the school entrance, three teachers were waiting to greet me--and before some 1200 students they hugged me! They had been little girls in the Tso family when I lived with the family, now teaching in a school of the new people's government. This greeting, like many other greetings I had in the presence of people who had never seen me before, demonstrated the lack of anti-foreign feeling. This was in 1959.

The other school I visited was Fu Hsiang which had been a Presbyterian middle school for girls. I had said I had a friend there and wondered if she still was there. They enquired. "Yes, she is still there. She is away, but will be back by the time you get there." So I went over. As I went through the gate onto the school campus, I found a big crowd of students waving and shouting, "Welcome to the foreign guest!" My friend hadn't arrived back yet, but the students had been told that her foreign friend was coming to visit. This was a government school now, and again, there was this friendly greeting to a foreigner. My friend, Fan Kuan, who had been a member of our Changsha YWCA board, came back and we had a warm reunion.

Then I met with my Chinese friends in Changsha. They had a little party for me; about 10 or 15 people came. One of them was a young doctor. Her mother had been the president of the YWCA. While at the YWCA, she learned to read and write. Her husband was a big postal inspector. A very fine family. Really upper-class, middle-class family. But the woman had learned in a Chengtu YWCA to read and write and then he was transferred to Changsha. She joined the Changsha YWCA; became the president. She had two daughters in school in Ginling College in Nanking. The mother said to me, "Miss Russell, my daughters are in school in Nanking and they have ideas that I don't understand. Their relations to men are different, their reactions to society are different. It's against everything I have ever known. But you in the YWCA have helped those girls to be good girls in life. They have different ideas, but you have helped them."

When I went back in 1959, one of these girls had become a doctor. She was teaching at Hunan-Yale, which is no longer Yale, but Hunan Medical School. At this party they had for me she said, "I want to tell you about myself." So she read for about a half-hour something she had prepared. She's a doctor at Hunan-Yale. She lives in the country

to work with the country people. And then she told what impressions the country people had made on her: that she went to help them, but she learned. She said, "For instance, I used to go to the store and buy eggs. Eggs are eggs. But when I went to the country, eggs became a completely different thing. I learned chickens get pip--chickens have diseases. Producing of eggs is a very different thing." She said, "Rice. I planted rice in the country. Well, I used to go to the store and buy rice, and if I didn't finish it, okay. When I had to work in the fields and produce that rice, it became a very different thing." She talked a half-hour about her experience of transforming herself from, say, a do-gooder to do-wither--working with people rather than working for people.

I: How long had she been in the countryside?

RUSSELL: I don't know. When I was in student work, students would come back from volunteer work in the countryside and tell of their experiences. You know the motto was: "Go down among the people," and a lot of students were going down to do medical work, to do political work, education work among the peasants. And invariably they would come back and say, "We were the ones who got educated."

This was before 1949. Students would come back from the countryside and say, "We learned about conditions. We learned from the peasants. While we went to teach, we were the ones who learned." That's not a new thing in China, this going to the countryside. People think that is something new. It's a process that has gone on for decades before liberation in China.

I: Now back to all those years. I was asking about the different places where you worked and lived. In some places you lived with missionaries on a campus or in a missionary compound and in some places you lived in the YWCA. In other places you lived in other quarters like with the Tso family.

RUSSELL: In Changsha I didn't live with the family. The Tso family gave a section of this tremendously big compound to us. In this we had rooms, upstairs and downstairs, six or eight rooms all together. In the same building, but in a separate section, three of the families, descendant from Tso Tsung-tang, lived: Madame Tso the Fifth, Madame and Mr. Tso the Second, and Madame the First, with the family of the grandson of the Fifth family--father and mother and eight children.

The other nine families, descendants of Tso Tsung-tang, lived in other sections of the large compound, about the size of several city blocks--with theatre, gardens and a granary to which the peasants brought their rice payments. The YWCA also had a hall across the garden where we carried on our work. This was right in the heart of the city--some blocks away from the Tso Temple, where we later carried on our work.

Our staff was three Swedish secretaries, myself and several Chinese staff. But the Chinese staff didn't live with us. They lived at home. When we moved into the Tso compound, one qualification: "Do not put any pressure on us to send our children to Christian schools." We said, "All right," we would agree to that. They said, "The Christian schools do not teach Chinese culture. They take all their illustrations from the West; they try to impose a foreign culture on us. We do not want our children subjected to that." So we said, "All right."

But in our activities, our discussion groups, our mothers' clubs, all our activities, who were the people who were teaching? It was the Chinese teachers from the Christian schools that came as volunteer workers in the YWCA. And then these people (of the 400 clan) would go and visit the Christian schools. They got to know the Christians in

town, the Christian activities. So in the second year, 20 to 30 of the Tso children were going to Christian schools! Not because we put any pressure, but because they got to know Miss So-and-So, Mr. So-and-So--these people from the Christian schools came and taught in our classes.

I: They were Chinese teachers?

RUSSELL: Chinese teachers, yes. So this was the process. The girls in the family, the older girls, didn't get out. It was the younger ones. But I remember the festival when they put flowers in the river. We took some of the girls out that night. I think two or three of the girls, and we went down to the river to see this display of millions of little flowers floating on the water with candles. They were so excited. But the thing that excited them the most as we came home was they saw the man who beat time--the night watchman on the street. They had heard him all their lives but had never seen him!

I: I'd like to get back, then, to this question of where you lived and with whom. So actually you were not inside the family. But you were in the same compound?

RUSSELL: In the same compound. And they had eight children. So these children were our pets and friends. And we were "aunties" to them. When I went back in 1959, I saw one of the boys, one of the brothers closest to me, Yung Yung. He was eight or nine when we lived in their compound. When I saw him in 1959, he was working in Sian in a big factory as an engineer. So I visited him. He had a family. I didn't meet his family. But he said, "You know, what you 'aunties' used to tell us about the new China, we've got it now." Well, I never remember us talking to the children about a new China. But the family, of course, probably said to the children: "Now these are foreign women. They are working here and trying to help us build a new China." But Yung Yung said, "You know what you 'aunties' used to tell us about the new China, we've got it now." We were so close to him as a little boy. So close he felt when I got old he'd have to support me!

I: How many members of the family did you meet in 1959?

RUSSELL: I met three there. I met some in Hangchow and Madame Tso in Shanghai; Yung Yung in Sian. They would tell me about members of the family. Some of them were in the government and got pulled over to Taiwan and were unhappy, but they were in the government entourage and got pulled over and were stuck there.

I: Of course, they were one of the great gentry, landlord families.

RUSSELL: Yes, that's right.

I: Did they suffer as a result in any serious way that you know of?

RUSSELL: That I don't know. They were very critical of the Kuomintang government. We used to talk and they would say, "It's enough to make you to be a Communist--what is this government doing?" They were not supportive of the Kuomintang government. Very critical of it--their constantly executing people and constantly fighting.

I: There were three of you, I believe, living there at that time. You were all Americans?

RUSSELL: No, three Swedes and I. For a while we had another American and for a while we had a Norwegian.

I: Was most of your foreign staff Americans?

RUSSELL: Oh, no. We had Australians, Irish, Scotch, British, Canadian, American. It was a mixture. The biggest number, of course, came from the United States. That's true.

I: Mainly, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian.

RUSSELL: That's right.

I: You wouldn't have any, for example, from Africa, Latin America ....

RUSSELL: No. We did a lot of calling among the members, talking to members in city work. One of the questions often asked was, "Could I ask you a question? Don't you have any Negro Christians in the United States?" I said, "Certainly we do." "Well, then why aren't there any Negro missionaries?" The non-Christians would ask questions like that. "If you have Christian Negroes, why aren't there any missionaries?" There was this awareness of this thing. They may not have put it in those terms exactly.

I: Did you live with Chinese colleagues in some of these places?

RUSSELL: In Kweiyang, I lived with Chinese. Also Tsinan, Hong Kong, Taiyuan and later in Changsha I lived with the Chinese.

I: When you lived at a YWCA, would that be in a kind of hostel building?

RUSSELL: Yes, that's right. In Changsha it was in a YWCA hostel.

I: The Chinese would live there, though? You lived with Chinese in this situation?

RUSSELL: Yes, that's right. In Changsha I got my own breakfast and went to Yale-in-China for lunch with the Yale boys and I went to the Presbyterian mission for supper. In other places, I got my own breakfast and sometimes all of my meals. In other places, I ate meals with my colleagues.

I: I suppose you knew Dwight Rugh?

RUSSELL: Oh, sure. Dwight and I went out on the same boat in 1917.

I: Have you seen him lately at all?

RUSSELL: No. I have seen Rowland Cross. He and I went also to China in 1917 on the same ship. He's in California. And he has another wife. His first wife died. He and some of the others took me out to a meal when I was there three or four years ago. I had a very nice time with former China missionaries there. We had a meeting at the home of one of the YWCA secretaries.

I: What town was that?

RUSSELL: Claremont.

I: Would you comment on the anomaly, I've used the word anomaly, of being a foreigner living in China, deeply committed to the people of China, and yet living on a different scale. You know, salary and food and housing.

RUSSELL: That's right. That's one of the things we had to live with, I guess.

I: Did it disturb you greatly, or how did you cope with that?

RUSSELL: I lived simply; I didn't live very luxuriously. It was just one of those things, I guess.

I: The problem, for example, of human misery, poverty, beggars and that sort of thing around you. You have already mentioned the program for beggars in Changsha that the YWCA was concerned with.

RUSSELL: That was because we had this very fine Swedish secretary who did that.

I: Were you related to that program? You say it was a Swedish secretary?

RUSSELL: No, handling the goods and that.

I: Those materials were sold overseas?

RUSSELL: Pretty much of it was sold in Sweden. We had a big business. And the women got good wages. They got back into their homes and united with their families and were able to support their families.

I: Was there a long-range rehabilitation that came through that, do you think, for those people?

RUSSELL: Oh, I think so--a personal, individual rehabilitation for both the men and the women. Many of the men got back into their guilds. The women got back into their families. Of course, the men got back into their families, too. But the men had this economic organization of guilds which, of course, women didn't have. But, still it reinstated those people and they got back and showed it could be done. I don't mean that every beggar got back. In relation to the number of beggars it was a relatively small number, but it showed what could be done.

I: I don't suppose you have any report on that project?

RUSSELL: No. I suppose the Swedes have.

I: Speaking of reports, do you have any personal files of reports from those days?

RUSSELL: I probably have. I found a box of so much material, early missionary material that I had collected. Just precious stuff that someday I want to put into proper hands.

I: Well, keep us in mind--our archives project here. Well, Maud, you started off our interview by remarking on what an exciting time of revolutionary fervor this whole period was. And, of course, we know that there were various strings and threads that all came together in 1949, or most of

it, anyway. But they didn't necessarily come together during this earlier period. They would spring up in different ways. I assume, for example, that the women's movement and that different aspects of the women's movement were part of this. Could you comment on this whole business of the women's movement and "new ideas" that women were getting?

RUSSELL: One part that I knew was the student. The women in the student movement. I was in Peking for the May Fourth, 1919 event. I saw the start of this tremendous student movement. It happened on May 3 and they split up this meeting of the cabinet. Didn't kill anybody, but they split the thing up.

I: Who split it up?

RUSSELL: The students. The students were opposing the cabinet, protesting against the authorities' selling of concessions to the foreigners. They got arrested. The next day in Peking on every main street corner in Peking was a sawhorse--10 students standing along a sawhorse. And the first student would stand up on it and start to tell the people what happened: "What did we do this last night? Why did these students get arrested?" The first student would say something and he would get pulled off. Then the second one would get up on the sawhorse and go right on.

By the time the 10 students finished talking about it, the people had a pretty good idea. (If you wanted a crowd in China, all you had to do was stand up and begin talking.) Everywhere all over the city this was going on. They filled all the jails with students. No more room in the jails. Then they began to fill the public buildings. I took a ricksha and rode around the city that morning. Students were leaning out of windows, yelling, "Down with the rotten government, down with the rotten government. Save your country!" This was the start of the student movement.

I: Was Yuan Shih-kai in power then?

RUSSELL: No, he died in 1916.

TAPE TWO-SIDE ONE

I: Anything else that you would like to say, reflecting on your years in China?

RUSSELL: The whole experience makes me feel so assured, so sure about the future. I can't see that there is any basis for being discouraged about the world. I think what China is demonstrating or what China is trying to do gives us tremendous assurance about the future. I cannot see being discouraged. Now, there are things in our society that we

have to struggle against and fight against, but there already is a tremendous force that is working for a decent humankind.

I: You don't see, for example, this enormous nuclear threat that hangs over us as a ....

RUSSELL: Oh, sure, that's a terrible thing. It doesn't need to be. But you have the Third World on the move; you have China on the move; you have revolutionary forces in every country.

I: How do you feel about these almost natural forces: population explosion, food problem, and all that?

RUSSELL: I think the general analysis of the population explosion is completely a bourgeois approach to it. I don't think that is something we need to worry about. I think China is showing that. I mean, look, when they jump from famine conditions to be able to feed 800 million people and export food in their new, non-capitalist society, that says something. And they are going on in the whole field of agriculture and producing of food.

I: But don't you think the Chinese are most unusual people regardless of what their political organization, etc., is? You look at the other developing countries around the world. Who can match the Chinese people?

RUSSELL: That's true, and they can learn from China. If China can do these things, they can do them, too.

I: Yes, I feel the same way. It does offer great hope.

RUSSELL: It's saying something to everybody. And then many of the things that China is working on we can apply right now without waiting for a change of our kind of society. Of course, the fundamental thing, the new ideology will come with a terrific struggle in this country, but we'll get it. But there are many things we can change right now.

I: What do you suggest we could do right now?

RUSSELL: I think the treatment of senior citizens. We could do that right now. We are already doing something in the field of medicine, learning from China.

I: What are the Chinese doing with senior citizens that you feel we can do?

RUSSELL: They are making them a functioning part of society, which we don't do.

I: For example, what could we do here?

RUSSELL: We could mobilize the political power of the senior citizens. Of course, that is beginning to be done in certain areas of the country by the Grey Panthers now,

and others. But if the senior citizens once begin to realize what a tremendous power they have, they could really affect the political situation in this country. One of the things, it seems to me, that the authorities are afraid of is the political power of the senior citizens. So what do they do? They have all kinds of things that make them satisfied: bingo, excursions, and that sort of thing, rather than making them think and act politically.

I have talked to groups and sometimes very substantial retired businessmen and people of that caliber and I say, "When you are a senior citizen, you can look objectively at problems. You don't have to figure, 'Will this please my employer,' or 'Will I lose my job if I say that?' You can be objective about it." And the response I get from these men--you touch a chord. "Yes, we can be objective now in these things."

Now, if they would apply that to the problems they have, think of what they could do. And this is coming more and more over the country. So I keep saying to friends and associations: "Send senior citizens to China. Not people who are well-to-do and can afford to go and come back and show you slides and things like that, but people who will come back and do political work." Now I know on

the Pacific Coast two women--one has been to China and the other hasn't yet. But these two women--and others like them--if they got there, they would have a revolutionary impact on two states on the basis of what they have done politically. We need to send people who will come back and be politically active, not just to come back and report on a nice trip to China.

I: So you don't think that senior citizens are by reason of being older, more conservative?

RUSSELL: Senior citizens would be free. Because they are senior citizens, they are free to be objective. What holds people back now is the economic things. If you begin to have socialist ideas or progressive ideas, you will likely lose your job, you're likely to be criticized. But if you are a senior citizen, you're not worring about a job anymore. You can express yourself.

I: What else can we learn from China that we can do now?

RUSSELL: In medicine we are learning--about burns, severed limbs, acupuncture. We're really learning there.

I think, also, we're going to begin learning in the field of agriculture. The Chinese are doing things in the field of agriculture. The FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization, in a report they made after a visit to China said,

"China is doing things that speak to the rest of the world in ways that we do not " about agriculture. They can speak to us, too. One of the recent criticisms that China makes of us in the U.S.: "Your agriculture policy is decided by people in Congress who are lawyers, not decided by farmers." If we could get Congressmen to go to China and see the role that farmers play, maybe we could affect some of the things that happen in Congress.

Then you take this whole question of earthquake study. The Chinese are far ahead of us in that. We can learn from them there, too. Also, in the field of appreciation of cultural heritage. Just think of the Chinese and how they revel in their cultural heritage, and how we have thrown away cultural heritage, for instance, of the Red Indians in this country, not to mention our varied ethnic groups. Think of the social organization the Indians had. Think of the things they produced. Indian heritage is just something for tourists to buy now. Think of what an enrichment it would be. There are so many things that China is doing in relation to problems that we have, too, that we can begin to apply here even before we get our revolution.

I: I've become much more sensitive to what they call the native peoples up here now since we've moved to Minnesota.

Yesterday, when we drove over to see your friends, we went right through a neighborhood where they live. I saw them on the streets there--Native Americans. They have a real problem. I was so impressed with what was quoted by an American Indian woman, a Navajo, in Shirley MacLaine's book. She said, "When I came back from China, I went back to the reservation and I realized that what we have here in our Navajo way of life, and we've had it for centuries, is Communism." That's fascinating.

RUSSELL: Oh, yes, and the whole treatment of the minority people, too. China has a lot to say about us. I think of these thousands and thousands of Americans who are going to China. They may not come back explicitly saying, "We can function to change, to improve this. We can change this." But it's in their thinking; it's the seed that's being planted. And every trip that goes to China, I just feel so excited about. Much more excited about that than my thinking of going to China. Every one of these groups. Think of what the result is going to be. They're coming back with slides. They're going to talk to their neighborhoods. Some of them are going to talk nationally. This is happening. They're just being impregnated--people to people.

I: You do have friends who were with you in China all those years: Americans, Swedes, and other colleagues. How have they responded to the change?

RUSSELL: That's very interesting. When I went to China in 1959, I came back and visited Sweden because while in China I met a Swedish woman and she wanted me to come to Sweden and visit. So I did. Then I met two of my Swedish colleagues. And I was so excited. The younger one was doing the same thing in Sweden that I am doing here. I was so excited. She was going all around talking. The older one was not well, so she was not doing it. But that was happening there.

I: How about your former American colleagues. How do they respond to the Communist revolution?

RUSSELL: Some of them miss the relatively luxurious days of living in China, I think. Some of them are doing good work, helping fellow Americans understand China.

I: What is their attitude toward the Communists? The fact that it was a Communist government which liberated China?

RUSSELL: I think some don't like it. But I haven't seen too many of them. I visited that group in California and they had me come and speak. Most of those are appreciative of what is happening. I really don't know too much.

I: Talitha Gerlach, of course, stayed there. Did anybody else stay?

RUSSELL: No, not of the YWCA.

I: I would like to ask you, Maud, to comment a bit about your contacts and impressions about the missionary work and their general effectiveness or ineffectiveness and the things they did wrong or did right, because we still have thousands of missionaries and they are still making mistakes. We know that in China, today, the Chinese consider that whole period to be part of cultural imperialism. You lived with missionaries on several occasions. Could you comment on those that you thought were effective and those that weren't, and why?

RUSSELL: I think, on the whole, the missionary personnel were very sincere people. I think they were doing good medical work, they were doing good educational work, and I don't think they, themselves, were aware of their role as a part of an imperialistic impact on China. I don't think they were aware of that. Many of them were doing social work, were agricultural missionaries, medical missionaries. They made a contribution. But I think their educational thing was very much criticized by the Chinese that I talked to because it centered on western culture and western ideas. It didn't take into account the Chinese conditions, I think.

Another aspect of missionaries is that in some cases they provided a base for intelligence work for the American military. I think one of the things that was so obvious, especially when I was way up country and in Changsha where we had American people, American gunboat people, coming again and again to the missionary home for meals or for tea, and, of course, they listened as missionaries talked about their work, their observations, their relations with Chinese personnel. Sometimes I remember I was with people who would come in from some evangelistic work, having been away for a couple of weeks, would come back and report what they'd seen. There was trouble there. There was fighting there. The tuchuns were saying this there. This was intelligence work; they were gathering information. But I don't think the missionary family, the missionary home, was aware that they were being used as a base of intelligence work. That kind of thing was quite obvious. Now that did not involve badness on the part of the missionaries. They weren't aware of it.

What I criticize is the whole missionary movement. I don't criticize the individuals because most of the individuals that I knew, I liked and I thought they were good people. Some I did criticize, like one well-known missionary, because he was obviously an agent of the Kuomintang and the American government. One thing that I

thought illustrated their role well was the study of 100 years of missionary work in China.

I: Is that the one called Christian Occupation of China?

RUSSELL: Yes. At that time, there was such a ferment in China about the foreign occupation. That word occupation was a bad word. And how that body of very highly educated missionaries, the intellectuals of the whole missionary movement, could produce that book and then in the title reveal the basic missionary stance. Look at the people who worked on it. You would expect them to be aware of the revolutionary ferment against "occupation"! This seemed to me to be a very good illustration of the whole attitude of the whole missionary movement.

So, I was not critical of the individual missionaries I knew. But I was beginning to understand the role the missionary movement played in furthering American imperialist policy--and critical that the missionary movement was still, at that date, a part of American imperialism.

I: Now there was a great difference between different missions and their policies and their theology, etc. You get some very conservative groups and very liberal groups. You get the Catholics and the Protestants. How did you distinguish in your experience?

RUSSELL: I didn't know much about the Catholics, except that everywhere you went they owned the best property in town and had a tremendous economic stake in the various cities and always owned the very best property, and cooperated with Protestants only when it served their interests. At that time, as far as I was aware, there wasn't much cooperation between the Catholics and Protestants. When I went back in 1959, I felt there was much more togetherness between the two groups. I felt that the Congregationalists were pretty progressive in China, I mean, working toward an indigenous church. Of course, that was the denomination that I originally belonged to. But I was impressed with what they were doing.

I: Did you see any of the rural work which the Congregationalists were doing? Like Hugh Hubbard, for example. They called it Rural Reconstruction Project.

RUSSELL: No, I didn't. Then another thing that was a Christian thing was Jimmy Yen's mass education. That was a very good thing. I think he did a real contribution there on the whole question of language and education. He's in New York now. And he is working in the Philippines. He has an office. I looked in the phone book. Was Jimmy Yen the one that started that model area?

I: Ting Hsien?

RUSSELL: Yes, well, I was very critical of that because they brought in highly competent foreigners to work on that. It wasn't the people of the area doing it. It was people coming in from the outside and doing it. And with money from the outside. And what they did, they improved the education of the area. They improved the economy of the area. They improved the health of the area. And immediately, of course, the government took advantage of it. They got much better soldiers out of that--very healthy people for their army. And they got more taxes out of the place because of the economic betterment. So it really served the interests of the reactionaries in China.

I: You were in many places around China, in the interior. How about a group like the China Inland Mission? Did you have any contact with that?

RUSSELL: Oh, yes, I knew a great many. And I was very fond of some of those people. I knew them in China and I stayed with some of them in some places. For instance, in Hankow, the China Inland Mission was where everybody stopped in, they took in guests. I stopped there all the time. And that was a very interesting place. They had missionaries from all over China coming in on their way into the interior and out.

You certainly got an awareness of the intellectual paucity on the part of a great many missionaries. They just didn't know what was happening in China. They knew what was happening in what they were doing, but they just didn't see the total situation. One of the things that impressed me was missionaries who talked in terms (this was the more enlightened missionaries) of helping China go modern and all that kind of thing, but absolutely unhappy when there was any Marxist or Communist feeling about it. Absolutely anti-it. I know very fine educational missionaries who bemoaned the revolutionary student movement!

And then when I came home and talked to missionaries, who had spent their whole lives in China trying to help modernize China, but absolutely thumbs down on what had happened after 1949. They didn't see the improvement in the life of the people, didn't see that now the people were taking over; so that that inability to see the large thing that is happening in China was, to me, an aspect of the missionary movement.

I: If the missionary movement as a whole was, as you say, a part of the total western imperialistic impact on China, how do you feel about the YW and YM work?

RUSSELL: There were Chinese organizations. Both the YM and YW were Chinese organizations. They were not missionary organizations.

I: Then, do you feel that the Chinese Communists, since 1949, have not been critical of the work of the YM or YW?

RUSSELL: When I went back in 1972, it seemed to me they were beginning to be critical of the work, but I didn't get specifics on it. I wish I had pushed for more specifics. I was told they were criticizing it, but I was never told any specifics. And, actually, I don't see where they have a basis for criticizing the YWCA, because it was Chinese doing, it was working in terms of the new China. It was never antagonistic to the probability that China was going Communist. I told you some of the things about the YWCA and its recruiting. I do think that the YWCA was aware of the Communists. We had Communists come and talk, both to the National staff and National Board. I cannot see, yet, why they were critical. When I went back in 1972, I was told that some of the people were critical of the YWCA and I just can't figure out where they were critical.

I: Do you think they might say the YMCA was not an adjunct of the revolutionary movement, because it was more reformist?

RUSSELL: That may be somewhat true. But I'm talking about the YW; I don't know about the YM. I think the YWCA was more in tune with the revolutionary movement in China than probably the YM was.

I: How do you make the distinction?

RUSSELL: One thing is that women were not so significant in a community as men were, so women could do things because they were just women.

I: What type of things, for example?

RUSSELL: I think the type of thing of having political discussions. I think having, as I told you before, to go out to study the conditions in the city and see how they could raise the wages of servants and on what basis we could raise the wages of servants. And I told you, we were criticized by the YMCA for doing things like that. They said we were going socialist. And the women in the YWCA, especially the staff, were usually single people who didn't have a stake in children in school, didn't have a stake in any business enterprises in the community, and, also, women did not have aunts, mothers and grandmothers who were already in society.

Now every man in China had a father, or uncle, or relative who was already established in society and was a

curb on what he could do. But the women were very free. They didn't have an aunt or somebody who would say, "Don't do this or don't do that," in terms of relationships in the community. Home-bound women lacked public pressures.

I: I don't understand why they did not have this kind of curb. After all, they had the same relatives men did.

RUSSELL: They didn't partly because the women were discounted a lot. But they had no community conditioning relations such as men had. They were just women doing it and partly because they were freer. They didn't have to think about children in school, picking up and getting a new house somewhere else. They could move much more freely.

I: I can see that. Let's say a Chinese man was in business. He would have the family connections in the business and he didn't want to rock the boat. He didn't want to do anything that would upset the rest of the family members in the business. Is that the idea?

RUSSELL: Yes, a woman was freer. She could move more easily and because they did discount what women were doing to a large extent, because they were just beginning to come into the community life.

I: Were these women, by and large, middle and upper class women? The real leaders, I mean, in your YWCA?

RUSSELL: I would say, yes, except in the industrial department. We had a very good staff in the industrial department of people who were the leaders in the various industrial groups. They were the working women themselves.

I: The neighborhood groups?

RUSSELL: No, it wasn't neighborhood. These were individuals. These girls were working in factories and would come to the YWCA center and belong to the YWCA industrial clubs and they ran themselves. They had their own organization. That was a very great training for social responsibility and democracy.

I: Did these clubs have regular academic classes?

RUSSELL: They had classes for Chinese, I think, English, probably arithmetic. They had classes that were helping these girls grow--industrial workers.

I: But there was not much work in the country with the country women. Is that right?

RUSSELL: We had a rural division. And as I say, I didn't know much about it. I knew some of the staff, but I didn't know much about their work. I never visited there.

I: Has there ever been a thorough, scholarly history of the YW in China published?

RUSSELL: I don't know. I don't think so.

I: There was one of the YMCA by Shirley Garrett. It's quite a new book. You might want to see it.

So do you think there would be a place for the YM and YW in China?

RUSSELL: No, I think the kind of social organization they have now takes care of all the kinds of things the YM and YW were trying to do--involve people in participation in society, involve people in growing. All of those things are part of the new society in China. I don't think there is a place for it.

I: A friend of mine who is a YMCA executive in Japan and a former Chinese YMCA executive was told: "We don't need the Y anymore. The kind of work that we were doing is all being taken care of."

RUSSELL: That's right.

TAPE TWO-SIDE TWO

I: When you went back in 1959, how widespread was the work of the Y?

RUSSELL: There were more YWCAs than when I had left. They had increased. That was in 1959.

I: Do you know how much?

RUSSELL: No, I don't. I visited while I was in many, many places in China. Took some pictures. I told you I fixed up a photo book of pictures of the National Y to look at.

I: Do you have a report of that trip in 1959?

RUSSELL: "New People in China." In the Far East Reporter.

I: What do you forsee now in the terms of a future for relations between the United States and China in the next five to ten years?

RUSSELL: I think the United States will probably work for formal diplomatic relations with China in terms of what the United States can gain from it. I'm not sure that the Chinese can gain an awful lot, except that they can get most-favored-nation trade. Meanwhile, of course, China will go on pursuing its policy of people-to-people which is a much more potent thing than state-to-state relationships and, of course, she is carrying this out throughout the world. I think there will be relations, and I think China, itself, will settle the question of Taiwan. That is not subject to any discussion of the United States, except "you get out."

I: And we've agreed that we're going to get out, but we haven't done it yet.

Maud, I'm afraid that our time is up, but thank you for giving us this time to record some of your China experiences and perceptions.